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FEDERAL INDIAN POLICY AS IT AFFECTS LOCAL INDIAN AFFAIRS.

BY- MCKINLEY, FRANCIS

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THIS DOCUMENT IS AN ADDRESS WHICH DISCUSSES THE PROBLEMS RELATED TO INDIAN EDUCATION AND SEVERAL PROGRAMS WHICH ATTEMPT TO OVERCOME THESE PROBLEMS. THE PROBLEMS PRESENTED INCLUDE THE INDIAN'S EXTREME POVERTY, HIS LOW ASPIRATION LEVEL, HIS SELF-IMAGE, INDIAN ACCULTURATION, AND SOCIAL DISCRIMINATION AGAINST THE INDIAN. THE PROGRAMS DISCUSSED ARE--A UTE EXPERIMENT OF PLACING THE STUDENTS IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS, A PROGRAM PUTTING THE TRIBAL COUNCIL THROUGH A LEADERSHIP TRAINING COURSE, AND A YOUTH CAMP EXPERIMENT THAT EXPOSED INDIAN CHILDREN TO SOCIAL EXPERIENCES, RECREATION, HOBBIES, SCIENCE PROJECTS, AND MUSIC PROGRAMS. TWO OTHER PROGRAMS MENTIONED ARE TRAINING INDIAN CHILDREN FOR LEADERSHIP, AND EDUCATION ADAPTED TO INDIAN CHILDREN'S NEEDS. THIS ADDRESS WAS GIVEN AT THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE INDIAN RIGHTS ASSOCIATION (81ST, ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY, MAY 12, 1964). (JH)

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FEDERAL INDIAN POLICY AS IT AFFECTS LOCAL INDIAN AFFAIRS

By Francis McKinley

(This article is the address, somewhat abridged, given by Mr. McKinley at the Eighty-first Annual Meeting of the Indian Rights Association, May 12, 1964. Mr. Francis McKinley is Assistant Director, Indian Education Center, Arizona State University, Tempe, Arizona.)

In meeting with non-Indian groups I sometimes get the impression that all we think about is the poor Indian and how he's treated, about how we are affected by the current policies, and by what Congress does. Really, we don't pay too much attention to it. We're just human beings. We're Americans, of course, and we know we're Indians and proud of it. One day Mrs. McKinley and I were asking our little girl about this.

Our children never have been really aware that they are Indians. We asked our little girl who is going to kindergarten with other children, and she was telling us about it. We were wondering how she felt being an Indian with predominantly white children. So we asked her, "Are you a little Indian girl?" "What do you think of yourself?" "Do you think you're an Indian?" And she said to us, "No, I'm just a plain housewife." So the younger people don't think too much about this. They see the television, and when they see an Indian they think he's a strange creature from Mars or some place all decked out in feathers. But still, we are very much aware of our Indianness.

Poverty of American Indians

You have heard talk about the American Indian Conference on Poverty. This seems to be the important thing at the present time. Focus is being made upon the conditions among the Indians in this land of ours. It is true that he is one of the groups that is most depressed. He is in a very poor status economically and socially. In many instances opportunities are denied him. He inhabits the poorest areas in the country, and it is true as President Johnson says that he should be put in the front as far as programs are concerned that deal with the poverty-stricken groups. The Commissioner of Indian Affairs in recent speeches has emphasized this same thing. When I heard all this talk about poverty I remembered that I read something about it a long time ago somewhere so I started looking around in our library and I came across the Meriam Report of 1928 put out by the Brookings Institution. I flipped it open and the first thing I read was some statement that went like this: "The Indian is in extreme poverty. He has all the problems around health--poor health--lack of housing, lack of education and so on and on and on. This report was made 36 years ago and I bet you could take sections of it and nobody would ever know this report was made 36 years ago; they'd think you were talking about the present poverty program. So this has been in existence for a long time.

In emphasizing the Indian poverty situation, the report that I was telling you about, the historical document, talks about education as being the primary thing with which to attack a problem.

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In the Poverty Act--The Economic Development Act of 1964--it states that education is primary; it talks about developing communities, getting community action; it talks about helping the young people in counselling and guidance programs; it talks about youth camps, recreation; the chief emphasis is upon education.

There are certain things I'd like to talk about in education. The Indian is one of the several culturally deprived groups in the country. You have your other minority groups, your rural areas, your Appalachian people, others who are in the straits of poverty. Some of them are of recent origin because industries are dying out--like the coal mines, the rural areas being depleted in the sense that small farm economy is no longer profitable, the movement of the young people to urban areas and so on. You have your pockets of poverty. The Indian reservations have been chronically the pockets of poverty.

The Importance of Education

The Indian will agree that education is very essential. This has changed from what he thought about education at the time the Meriam Report was written. At that time the Indians used to run with their children into the woods so they would keep them away from the school people. The main institutions were boarding schools and naturally they didn't want their children to be taken away from them and put into regimented boarding schools. But things have changed since that time. The Bureau educational policy has been relaxed, the militaristic teachers have been taken away and some fine schools are operating today.

Emphasis, however, has been on quantity. They admit the fact that they have been busy trying to get the Indian children into schools particularly in those areas that are isolated like the Navajo country in Arizona and parts of Utah. They recognize that they must now start focusing on quality so that they'll have better education, better materials, better teachers and better facilities. The Indian, of course, supports education. But the way that he looks at it is in terms of the bread and butter sense. He's looking at education in terms of skills and technical abilities. He may look at it simply in the way of doing a skill, like being a typist. He might see his son as a lawyer, as a Bureau of Indian Affairs official--whatever his limited experience has shown him as jobs that have status and prestige; his experience has forced his attention upon these things. This is no different from the attitude of minority groups in cities or countries everywhere. They're thinking more about what they can do with education in terms of economics. They are not looking at it as a way of gaining status through intellectual achievement. The problem develops because our schools are looking at education for itself. They are talking about intellectual achievement, verbal facility, numerical competence. Why? You just look at all these tests they give your children. Intelligence and achievement tests emphasize being able to speak and to understand concepts. And this is important because they want the children to qualify for college. They want to get them into better prep schools possibly. They are talking about children getting into Harvard, Ivy

League, Naval Academy, and the Air Force. They are even trying now to get them into State Universities because state universities are upgrading their requirements. And it's becoming more acute because in a year or two our schools are going to be overcrowded. In the meantime, here is this Indian child, as well as many a child in the culturally deprived groups, who is still thinking about skills and technical abilities. He is actually opposed to the schools which are emphasizing things unimportant to the child and to the parents. Although they admit that education is important they don't see it the way the schools do. Actually the teachers are of middle class origin so they're not going to see it the way the Indian child is seeing it. They are giving him materials which emphasize middle class values about Tom and Jane going to the supermarket, and getting on a bus, and riding in from the suburban areas. They are not talking about the Indian and his situation. The purposes and goals of the schools Indians attend are different from what they feel education ought to be.

Discrimination without Prejudice

The other problem that arises is that there is discrimination and I don't mean discrimination on account of hate or prejudice. I mean discrimination in the sense that we all discriminate. We discriminate colors; we discriminate light whether it is strong or weak. Teachers are not aware of it but they do discriminate against the Indian child. They feel that here is a hopeless case; we can't get him educated; we'll have to get him through; we'll have to get him a social promotion; we don't have time to pay any attention to him; we'll leave him sit where he is; we don't understand him and his culture; maybe I ought to speak the language, not knowing that most Indian children can't even speak their own language. But here is where the discrimination arises because the teacher is trying to see the Indian child in the sense of his own values. And so without prejudice, we have discrimination, if you can make such a distinction.

Ute Experiments in Education

Well, what do you do in education, then, to alleviate it? Maybe we can go back to some of the experiences that we've had in the Ute tribe. I believe that the Tribal delegates and the government officials and others who are interested in education seem to be aware that we've done a lot of pioneering in the field of education. In 1952 most of our students were attending the Indian Bureau operated boarding schools. The Bureau of Indian Affairs came forward with the recommendation that these children ought to be in public schools. They said they can't learn anything in boarding schools anymore where they are segregated and they ought to be in public schools. So our children were put in the public schools. No attempt was made to orient the student; no attempt was made to work with the parent. At the time, because I am a product of a public school system, I said, "Fine, that's the most wonderful thing that ever happened; now they'll learn." I guess we were thinking that by the process of osmosis or some sort of absorption they would immediately become educated by association. But unfortunately, this didn't happen. In 1957 we had one lone graduate from high school. Our

average attendance was 78%. This was really dismal. The public schools about threw up their hands. They were even saying, "Why these children just can't learn. They must be mentally inferior." This is when the Tribe said, "Let's do something about it. Let's just don't sit around and wish and dream and cuss people. Let's get out and do something. What can we do?"

A Program of Leadership Training

About this time several things had happened. Our Tribe was divided. The mixed-blood element, those of one-half Indian blood or less were terminated. They had been occupying most of the leadership positions. The full bloods were left by themselves. Our chief criticism came from those who said, "What's the matter with you, you're taking away your leadership, what are you going to do now?" So I said, "Well, if its leadership we lack then we'll develop it; then in the next couple of years we'll have leadership." We took our Tribal Council to the University of Utah and told the University people, "Here we have the Tribal Council. They want to be leaders. Have you got anything by which you can teach them to be leaders?" And they said, "Yes." "We'll start them off by having a Workshop on Human Relations." So we had Workshops and we had members of the Tribal Council plus others that we were going to use as leaders in recreation programs and in community action programs, undergo this sort of training. Of course, it took time for it to develop. But one of the things that this group said was, "We know the value of training, we know the value of education so we're going back to that University of Utah and tell them that our kids aren't achieving and ask them to come out and see what's wrong. We're not going to ask the Public Schools--they don't know what they're doing; we're not going to ask the Bureau because they won't do it anyway--they haven't got any money; so we will." We made a contract with the University of Utah. They came and like all academic people the first thing they wanted to do was survey. And we said, "No, let's don't go into that. Let's do one thing first and we'll go along with this--let's test them (the children). But we don't want the tests they're using now--the Iowa, the Stanford Binet, the California--they have all sorts of names." But anyway, we said "We don't want anything of that." Let's develop one of our own." From certain tests we selected the parts that stressed the non-verbal area because we knew that our kids would fall down on the verbal achievement area; this seemed to work. At least we got an idea of what was wrong with our kids. We found that upon entrance in school the achievement level was about 10% below the white children in kindergarten and it stayed the same level up until sixth grade then the difference in achievement became even greater. And the funny part of it was that at the 12th grade it came together. And you know why it came together at the 12th grade? Well the white kids had made it--so they quit working while the Indian kids were still trying.

Variety of Programs Started

This was when we started a number of educational programs. I'll mention them briefly: We sponsored a Youth Camp in which we emphasized

remedial training, social experiences, recreation, developing hobbies, working on science projects, music programs; we drew upon college students in local areas; we got a group of volunteers from the Harvard and Radcliffe colleges and they came out to our reservation as Youth Camp leaders; we started youth work camp programs in which the Ute Indian boys 14-18 years were put to work in conservation practice developing the tribal lands; we developed recreation programs; we developed a pre-kindergarten program for training youngsters for entrance into these programs and last year we developed a full time nursery program in which we enrolled and even started out with my 17-month old child and threw him into the school. Mrs. McKinley objected and complained and criticized. I said, "You wait until he gets away and you'll be free to do what you want." Well, we took him to school. He sat still for 15 minutes just watching goldfish swim around. It was like us adults sitting around for hours doing nothing but staring at something. This was a real achievement for him because he never would sit still. These are some of the programs that we have developed. And the reason we did this--we kept coming down from the top by the way. First we said, "Let's get them into college." And we weren't able to do this. And we said, "Well, we can't do it because they're not graduating." And then we got into the high school and we found they were having problems and we said, "Well, maybe something's wrong in the Junior High School." So we went into the Junior High School and found problems there. We kept coming down until we were at the Kindergarten level and we still had problems. "What's wrong?" Well, we said "Let's look at our 3 and 4 year-olds and see what's wrong with them. There was nothing wrong with them. They were just as normal as they could be. In fact they did better on the tests we gave them than white children of the same age level. Because there was one thing they could do that the white kids couldn't do. They were independent. They could go out and do things without having mama say to do this and do that. They knew what they were doing. They went ahead and did things that young white 3 and 4 year-olds wouldn't be able to do. So we said, "Well apparently we got some normal people here so let's see what we can find out about them that keeps them from achieving in school." This has been a real laboratory and really amazing. I've never worked on anything that's been so inspiring. I didn't ever think that I'd ever be interested in the education of little kids. I never dreamed of this. But this is where I am now.

Child Training Adapted to Needs

We have hired a very competent nursery school teacher. She had been down at the University of California, Los Angeles, running the laboratory. She came to our school and said, "first, we got to give them freedom. We got to give them liberty." She said the middle class children are restricted. They're underprivileged and they can't do the things they want to do. The parents are pushing them and although they live in a democracy they don't even enjoy democracy.

They're not respected and they're not recognized as persons. They don't have any dignity--this is what she was saying. They have to start learning to read and write almost before they are out of diapers. They have to start preparing for college at 5 years old because their parents want to get them into the Naval Academy. They have to be able to pass these tests; they have to say 'Yes' and 'Please' and all this sort of thing. We've got to give them freedom. All right. Give our kids freedom.

Well, she found while trying to put these things into practice that the Indian kids have too much freedom. There was nothing wrong with them in the sense that they were restricted. The problem with them was that they needed more structure--what the white kid had too much of. They had to learn to work in groups. They had to learn to be on time. They had to learn to work on schedule. They had to learn to look at a picture and say not only I see a dog there, but he's a Collie, he's brown and white, and he eats dog food, and you get the dog food from the market, and you pay so much for his food. All the Indian kid sees is a dirty dog; that's all, a mongrel; he doesn't know he's a pure bred Collie. The problem is that parents aren't telling their children about things, explaining and defining what they see and experience. What they're saying is, "Get out of here. Go on and play. Get out of my way. You're too young to ask questions. You're too young to know. And, in fact, in many of the Indian cultures you're never to talk about tribal business, you're never supposed to be philosophic or say things of wisdom unless you've got grey hair, unless you're bent over with experience." Even "young people" of about 40 or 50, have no business talking sense. They are told to go and have a good time. Grandmom and granddaddy will stay and raise the children. The only problem is that Grandmom is running around with dyed hair and a red mouth trying to be an 18-year-old; granddaddy is doing something else other than what his vocation is and that is to teach wisdom to the children. This is what the problem is among a great many Indian people. So this is what we said we would do in the pre-school program. We'll structure these children so they'll begin to be able to verbalize, to define, to clarify, to talk; we'll take the parents and tell them this is what you must do if you're interested in your children, if you want them to achieve. You've got to pay attention to them; don't laugh at them. That's another thing about Indian people. When a child is trying to do something, they'll laugh. Oh, it's hilarious, it's funny. So don't ever laugh at the children. Let them laugh at themselves, but never laugh at them.

The Male Image in Indian Life

About a week or so ago I went by the school and saw that the nursery school teacher had the boys dressed up in girls dresses; the boys and girls--had hats on and they were playing. I knew what she was doing so I didn't go in. I didn't want to embarrass the kids because I knew what would happen. So after it was all over with, I went in and I said, "What are you doing?" And she said, "we're role-playing." I asked, "Why are you doing that?" She said, "We want to

see what their concepts are of their parents. We want to see how they feel towards them." "And it's funny though," she said, "everybody wants to be girls including most of the boys." "And there are only one or two girls who want to be men." And it just happened to be those girls--one of them was my girl and the father of the other was another employee from the tribe who had a job. There is no respect to the male. The reason is that the image of father is very weak. Some of the children didn't even have any fathers; some of them were from broken homes. And so their image of a male wasn't there; it was all toward the mother. It shows us we're going to have to start emphasizing the concept of the male; it is possibly due to the unemployment situation. We feel that the role of the Indian male has been diminished and he's never picked it up. In the first place he was deprived of his role as the hunter. Then the government made a farmer and stock man out of him. He's been deprived of that because small farm economy is no longer profitable. So he's had to quit being a farmer. And he can hardly be a stockman because the Mormon church, the supermarket and the movie actresses own all the cattle now. They can get capital tax gains business out of it. They make money. The role of the male is no longer there. And I predict that we will train them under present programs in skills which will soon be outdated because of automation. We know we have many skilled people on the reservation in spite of the fact that people say they need training. We have skilled carpenters, skilled welders, blacksmiths, plumbers, all of them products of the Indian Bureau vocational schools or Bureau's relocation programs, or programs that are being developed by other agencies like the Manpower Development Training Program. In fact we have a school now that trains young men to be farm mechanics. But in a few years they're going to be obsolete as a dinosaur; the trend is toward automation. So there again you have the Indian male trying to reach status and again dispossessed of his role. And this has great significance in the problems of the Indians.

To Train Tribal Leaders

Well, what are we doing about it? One thing we're going to do is to take those young men and we're going to develop them into leaders and managers. Why? Because the tribe is developing enterprises on the reservations. We have now developed a cattle enterprise. The small operators cannot do it. They've failed a dozen times. We've had money given to them from the Tribe; we've had various kinds of schemes trying to develop the cattle industry; re-payment cattle programs; we've had the revolving credit program; we've had many other plans; all trying to develop the individual operator. What happened? He can't make it. In the first place he hasn't the managerial ability. It takes a real skilled manager to operate a farm--it's a business. He fails because he doesn't have the necessary capital; he fails because he buys too many things like a tractor and all its implements, he builds a house, he buys a pick-up and a big truck, he sits on about 40 acres from which he can only get about $400.00 for annual income. This is silly. This is the kind of program that he's been doing. Naturally he's got an understanding of the economics of the situation. So what we've decided is that we are going to develop our own enterprises, operated by the tribe, capitalized by the tribe, and managed by the tribe and the managers are going to be our own Indians. This is a big, tall order. Right now we have no managers. We have to employ non-Indians. We need to develop those managers.

It will take intensive training and a real change in attitude toward education on the part of the Indian.

Looking Ahead

I hope I've given you some insight into our major interests, into education programs which we have said are very important--in fact, I endorse everything that's been said by the Commissioner, by the President and Congress that education is essential. But education doesn't make sense if you just talk about it. You've got to do something about it. You've got to get right down to the bed rock and find out what's wrong, like we did with our children. We know what's wrong with our people now. We're working on this. It's going to be a long tough process but I'm sure that within a few years we're going to start getting over these problems. Parents are interested in their little children and want them to get ahead and it is our responsibility to show them the ways they can help. In fact, I'm a chief proponent now of pre-school education. I think we ought to pay a lot of attention to the other educational levels, but the pre-school area is where we ought to do the study, the research. We ought to get more staffing because the Bureau doesn't have any money for this kind of program. Their program is geared to the formal school situation. I think the other aspect of education, just to mention briefly, is that we've got to begin to give our children social experience such as can be obtained from these Youth Camps. Perhaps the people here in the East can trade children for the summer. Some children can go up to New England Camp area and we can take children from that area so that there is intermingling of experience. This experience is what our isolated reservation child lacks. This is one of the reasons he can't become adjusted to City life in many cases. They have a problem when they get into colleges and universities. It was mentioned by Youth at the Washington Conference that there are a great many dropouts--simply because they haven't prepared themselves to go there.

It is true that many advances have been made. Indian participation is increasing. You see leaders from Indian groups who appear to be advancing and assuming control over problems. The Indian person wants opportunities and he wants a chance at achievement. He wants to be a success. He wants employment so that he can acquire a good standard of living. He wants to participate as a contributing member of society; he wants to be a respected, dignified person, a person of worth and recognized as such. I hope that his fellow Americans can give him the opportunities and the support and encouragements that he so urgently needs to overcome obstacles which face him today.